

# The Advocate

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## THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE.

Kansas Still in the Lead—The Order Organized in This State—The Rebel Brigadier Scare Exploded.

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The Cincinnati conference convened on the 22d of February, 1887, and at once proceeded to organize. The following organizations were represented: Knights of Labor, Farmers' and Laborers' Co-operative Union, trades unions of Cincinnati, Farmers' Alliance of the northwest, Grange, Agricultural Wheel, etc. A plan of organization was agreed upon for open political action and the following platform was adopted by the consolidated orders for the campaign of 1887:

### PREAMBLE.

The delegates of various industrial and reform political organizations have assembled from thirty-one states and territories on this anniversary of the birth of "The Father of his country," to view the situation of public affairs and advise proper action. A general discontent prevails on the part of the wealth producers. Farmers are suffering from a poverty which has forced most of them to mortgage their estates, and prices of farm products are so low as to offer no hope for relief except through bankruptcy. Laborers are sinking into greater and greater dependence. Strikes are resorted to without bringing relief, because of the inability of employers in many cases to pay living wages, while more and more are driven into the street. Business men find collections almost impossible. Meantime hundreds of millions of idle public money, which is needed for relief, is locked up in the United States treasury in grim mockery of the distress. Land monopoly flourishes as never before, and more and more owners of the soil are daily becoming tenants. Great transportation corporations still succeed in extorting heavy dividends upon watered stocks, through unjust charges. The United States Senate has become an open scandal, its seats being purchased by the rich in defiance of the popular will. A trifling fisheries dispute is seized upon as an excuse for squandering public money upon unnecessary military preparations which are designed to breed a spirit of war, to ape European despotism, and to empty the treasury without paying the public debt. Under these and other alarming conditions, we appeal to the people of this whole country to come out of old party organizations, whose indifference to the public welfare is responsible for this distress, and help us to organize a new political party, not sectional but national, whose object

shall be to repeal all class laws in favor of the rich, and to relieve the distress of our industries by establishing the following principles:

### LAND.

1. Every human being possesses a natural, inalienable right to sufficient land for self support, and we desire to secure to every industrious citizen a home, as the highest result of free institutions. To this end we demand a graduated land tax on all large estates, especially those held for speculative or tenant purposes; the reclamation of unearned land grants; the immediate opening of Oklahoma to homestead settlement; the purchase of all unoccupied Indian lands, and the settlement of the various tribes upon lands in severalty; also, laws preventing corporations from acquiring real estate beyond the requirements of their business, and alien ownership of land. The systems of irrigation in states and territories where necessary, shall be under such public control as shall secure the free and equitable use of the waters and franchises to the people.

### TRANSPORTATION.

2. The means of transportation and communication should be owned and controlled by the people, as is the United States postal system, and equitable rates everywhere established.

### MONEY.

3. The establishment of a national monetary system in the interest of the producer, instead of the speculator and usurer, by which a circulating medium in necessary quantities and full legal tender shall be issued directly to the people without the intervention of banks, or loaned to citizens, upon ample security, at a low rate of interest, to relieve them from the extortions of usury and enable them to control the money supply. Postal savings banks should be established. While we have free coinage of gold we should have free coinage of silver. We demand the prompt payment of the national debt and condemn the further issue of interest-bearing bonds, either by the national government or by states, territories, counties or municipalities.

### LABOR.

4. Arbitration should take the place of strikes and other injurious methods of settling labor disputes; the letting of convict labor to contractors should be prohibited, and the contract system be abolished in public works; the hours of labor in industrial establishments be reduced, commensurate with the increase of production by labor-saving machinery; employees be protected from bodily injury; equal pay given for equal work for both sexes; Agricultural and Co-opera-

tive Associations be fostered and incorporated by law. The foundation of a republic is the intelligence of its citizens, and children who are driven into mines, workshop and factories are deprived of education which should be secured to all by proper legislation. We desire to see labor organization extend throughout the civilized world until it shall be impossible for despots to array the workingmen of one section against their brothers of another country.

### SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.

5. In appreciation of the services of United States soldiers and sailors, we demand for them justice before charity. The purposely depreciated money paid them during the war should be made equal in value to the gold paid the bondholder. The soldier was promised coin or its equivalent, and was paid in depreciated paper. The bondholder loaned the government depreciated paper and contacted to take it back, but it was paid in gold.

### INCOME TAX.

6. A graduated income tax is the most equitable system of taxation, placing the burden of government on those who can best afford to pay, instead of laying it on the farmers and producers, and exempting millionaires, bondholders and corporations.

### UNITED STATES SENATE.

7. The capture of the United States Senate by millionaires and tools of corporations who have no sympathy with free institutions, threaten the very existence of the republic. We demand a constitutional amendment making United States Senators elective by a direct vote of the people.

### IMMIGRATION.

8. Such state and national laws should be adopted as shall effectually exclude from America the Mongolian slave and Asiatic competition. [Amended: The tide of immigration to this country threatens to result injuriously to the social condition of the nation and interferes with the opportunities of our present population of skilled and unskilled labor in procuring employment; there are now tens of thousands of men throughout the nation who cannot obtain employment; therefore we demand of the government a more stringent enforcement of existing laws governing immigration, prohibiting the importation of contract labor, and it is the duty of Congress to enact laws that will check the tide of immigration and the flooding of the country with foreign laborers.]

### ARMED MEN.

9. The employment of bodies of armed men by private corporations should be prohibited.

### EQUALITY.

10. The right to vote is inherent in citizenship, irrespective of sex.

### TEMPERANCE.

11. Excessive wealth, resulting in luxury and idleness on one hand and excessive toil and poverty on the other, lead to intemperance and vice. The measures of reform here demanded will prove to be the scientific solution of the temperance question.

In the latter part of July 1887, the Farmers' and Laborers' Union was disorganized and merged into the Union Labor party, and in the fall of '87 carried Labette county, Kansas (electing everything including even road overseers) and Calhoun county, Mississippi, and polled a large vote in many parts of the country. But the open political movement, like the settlers' League, proved unequal to the secret caucus of old party leaders, and the Farmers' and Laborers Union was reorganized in the latter part of '88, and in '89 the name of the organization was changed to the Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, and our great movement is the result. This is a brief history of the movement and we have the correspondence on file in this office.

In conclusion, friends, let us suggest that in the light of past events while we recognize the necessity of political parties in conducting the affairs of the public under our form of government, those parties should be worthy and discuss fairly and honestly the issues, vital to the best interest of the country, and when the vote is registered on election day it should crystallize in forms of law the deliberate will of a majority of the voters, uninfluenced by party spirit, deception, prejudice or fraud. Such a condition is necessary to the perpetuity of our American institutions of government, and without it, our republic, like those of the past, must perish from the face of the earth, and the historian will be called upon to record another failure, on the part of the people, in their efforts at self-government. The leaders of the two old parties, both north and south, in and out of Congress, have proven themselves dishonest and not worthy the confidence of true Alliance people. They have deceived the voters, both north and south, and at times worked upon the prejudices of the people, prejudices engendered by the war of the rebellion, until they have succeeded in antagonizing the north and south; arraying those two sections of our country against each other; while England, through New York, (that holds the balance of power between the two parties) have forced a financial policy upon

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